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ABSTRACT

This booklet outlines existing and emerging career selection, reentry, and advancement opportunities for females throughout the European community. Existing educational and employment opportunities for males and females in various Western European nations are compared. New opportunities for girls and new occupations for women who are unemployed or who wish to reenter the work force after a period of interruption are discussed. The concluding section focuses on women's rights to career advancement. Throughout the booklet statistical information is presented along with commentary stressing that more opportunities are becoming available to women, that women should work for increased educational and employment opportunities, and that the new perspectives for women will be what women themselves make of them. Information on conditions in Belgium, Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom is included in the booklet. (MN)

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NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR WOMEN

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CEDEFOP

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR WOMEN

In career selection

In return to working life

In career advancement

CEDEFOP

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In a large German factory specialized technician training is provided for 15 boys and 15 girls.
This is interesting, is it not? At long last women have an opportunity to pursue a reputedly masculine occupation.

Yes, but
most of the boys have completed lower secondary school only, most of the girls have attended upper secondary school:
- do girls have to study longer?

the boys are 15 to 16 years of age when they begin training whereas the girls are 16 to 19 years of age:
- would girls be less mature than boys of the same age?

most of the boys have chosen this occupation, but for the girls it is just an opportunity grasped:
- why is there this difference?

on average the boys wrote four whereas the girls had to write up to 30 letters of application, quite in spite of the fact that they were older and had studied longer:
- why was this so?

Actually, the number of young people who leave school without a qualification and find no employment is steadily increasing, and of this category seven out of 10 are girls.

**It has been this way for a long time . . .
but . . . everything can change if . . .
women take the initiative.**

Many girls believe that by attending courses in dressmaking, domestic science, or household tasks they are acquiring a vocational qualification.
These courses do not, however, lead to a real qualification.
Result: a difficult situation arises on the labour market: difficulties in finding a job, difficulties in obtaining adequate pay, difficulties as regards career advancement, and difficulty in retaining a job in times of economic slack.

It is more important for our sons than for our daughters to have occupational skills, many parents are still saying. When a choice has to be made, the sons are given priority. They must be enabled to pursue a career.

Marriage, maternity: these two considerations still play a cardinal role in the scholastic and occupational orientation of girls.
But these are not occupations! They do not guarantee a livelihood: unemployment, accidents, divorces, and widowhood are realities of life which call for a relearning process which is much more difficult for women to master, as they have not been prepared for it.

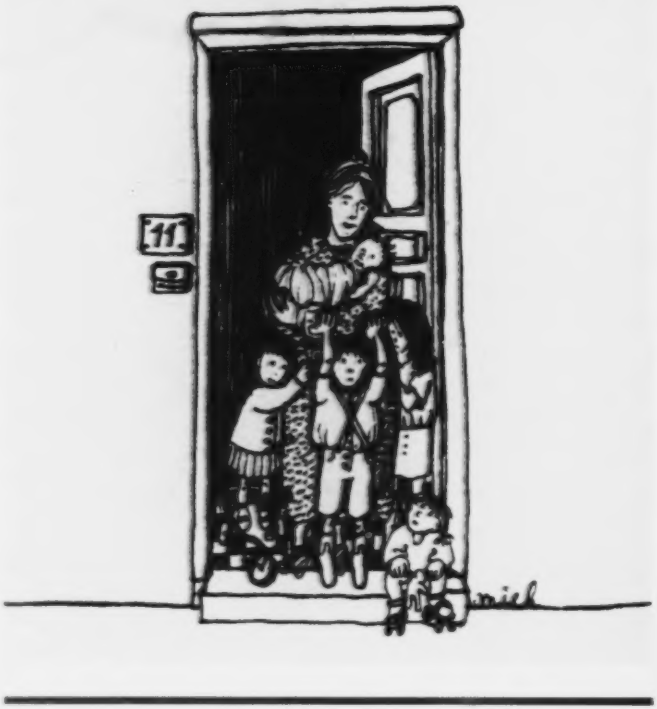
Throughout the European Community

More and more women are and will be working:
in 1974 over 38 million women were working,
in 1979 the figure stood at 41 million.
This is an increase of nearly 8%.
During this same period the number of employed men remained constant at roughly 68 million.

Certainly
- it is more difficult for girls to find their first job;
- their choice of occupation is more restricted;
- their vocational training is frequently poorly adapted to the needs of the labour market and they then find themselves in the category of no qualification;
result: uninteresting work, low pay, threat of unemployment;
- women are given less responsibility and have less opportunity to advance in their career;
- many women hold down a job and run the family household at the same time;

And yet . . .
In all Member States of the European Community legislation exists which guarantees women
- equality of remuneration,
- equality of access to employment,
- and

Equality of access to vocational training of all types.



Furthermore . . .
new opportunities for women

In nine Member States of the European Community — Belgium, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom — steps have now been taken to launch efforts to ensure that women have the same opportunity in the working world as men are accustomed to.

Cedefop — European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training — has completed a study aimed at determining what training opportunities the innovative programmes of vocational training are making available

- for girls leaving school,
- for unemployed women,
- for women who wish to return to work after having left employment for a number of years.

How do women prepare for and take up occupations which have hitherto been reserved for men?

Occupations have no sex

Here are a number of examples:

New career opportunities for girls

In Hanover in the Federal Republic of Germany a company manufacturing rubber products trains girls in masculine occupations.
After consultation with representatives of the company and the company physicians, a training programme was set up.
The project was announced in the press, in the schools, in the placement offices, etc.
Seventy applicants responded, and in September of 1978 28 girls began training as adjustors and regulators of machines.
Training lasts three and a half years.

Here are some of the subjects taught:
- calculation and control tasks,
- study of machine components,
- machine maintenance and control,
- industrial design.

Problems are regularly discussed at group level, and the organizers of the programme have now realized that women are much more capable than they had assumed.
The trainees, for their part, are highly motivated. Having completed a period of adaptation, they no longer have any fear of technical problems. But . . . they still feel themselves being thought of as exceptions and find themselves being treated as 'rare birds'.

In Liège in Belgium women can pursue a career in the police force after having completed training identical to that which their masculine colleagues undergo.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg offers women an opportunity to become assistant police officers and fully-fledged police officers. It is not the fault of the male applicants that although 220 women and girls have now

applied for training, only 66 have met the requirements and only 20 (aged 17 to 20) have been selected. The project started in 1979.
General training for women is practically the same as that for men. The first promotion is obtained after completion of a two-year period of training.
Training subjects comprise

- tactics,
- physical training,
- shooting practice,
- laws and regulations,
- practical work in the police department,
- a period of training abroad.

At the beginning the training is sometimes difficult for the women, particularly as regards physical training to which they are not accustomed, but they remain strongly motivated.
The responsible officers in the police department and the relevant ministry have been very impressed with the serious approach taken by the women trainees and are very satisfied with the programme as a whole.
Women trainees are guaranteed the same opportunity for advancement as is open to men trainees.
In the light of the success of this project, the constabulary is now planning to launch a similar programme.

In Denmark the municipality of Herlev has developed a pilot project entitled alternative training. This programme is open to young people who, having left school without a qualification and without a certificate, have practically no chance of finding a job. There are twice as many girls as there are boys in this category.
A representative of the municipality of Herlev establishes contact with young people who have left school early and encourages them to undergo vocational training or take up work of some kind rather than face a long period of unemployment.
Training lasts two years. It comprises obligatory subjects, practical exercises in a workshop, vocational orientation, and a period of practical training (building construction, gardening, hospital service) in preparation for entry into the working world.
The trainees, after also obtaining a school-leaving certificate, join together in groups and put their acquired knowledge and skills to practical use. In 1979, for example, 26 of the girls joined together and made a motion picture.

Get yourself trained, Marie!
Ever since 1972 an association in the Netherlands has been encouraging girls leaving school at primary level to either continue their schooling or undergo vocational training and to select an occupation which will enable them to become economically self-sufficient later on.

Do you know that in Belgium, in Denmark, in the Federal Republic of Germany, in France, in Ireland, in Italy, in Luxembourg, in the Netherlands, and in the United Kingdom many women and girls are now working as
auto mechanics, welders, joiners, truck drivers, electricians, turners, crane operators, cabinet-makers, gardeners, engineering technicians, pilots, electrical mechanics, locksmiths, building construction workers, radio and television technicians, laboratory technicians (physics), opticians, etc.?

More and more occupations are now acquiring a feminine designation, . . . even though language takes a long time to catch up!

Yes, also for women opportunities are open

New occupations for women who are unemployed or who wish to re-enter the working world after a period of interruption

It is true that more women than men are unemployed and that women have more difficulty in finding employment. For a man, being or becoming a father does not mean that he must stop his training or leave his job. On the contrary! For a woman the employment situation is much more difficult: the task of being a mother and running a household is often still assumed to have priority. It is therefore necessary for a working woman to reconcile working life with family responsibilities at the cost of a double workday. But even though women lose their job or retire from the labour market for a period of time, they still remain on or return to the labour market. This latter is occurring more and more frequently.

Women, invest your efforts in new occupations!

In December of 1978 13 women aged 30 to 50 began a six-month course of training in Lyon, France, in order to become sales counsellors for deepfrozen products:
- a new occupation,
- an expanding economic sector,
- a sector in which women and men can start out on an equal footing.

Seven unemployed women (formerly hairdressers, typists, dressmakers) and six women who had been away from the working world for a long time have now found their occupation.

How did they hear about this project? They
- read about it in the paper,
- heard about it at a meeting of women,
- heard about it from a friend,
- heard about it at a placement office.

One participant remarked: 'I decided to undergo training because I *wanted* to work'.
The training programme consists of technical subjects:
- cold technology and cold chains,
- knowledge of appliances,
- electricity,
- biology and chemistry of deepfrozen technology,
- food hygiene and dietary science,
- processing of deepfrozen products,
- packaging of deepfrozen products;

commercial subjects:
- sales and distribution techniques,
- principles of accounting,
- legislation governing deepfrozen products,
- business correspondence,
- written and oral expression.

An open-air gymnastics course lasting one and one half hours a week is also offered.

The project organizers constantly seek to place the trainees in situations similar to those they will subsequently face in working life. The trainees seek out those firms which might be willing to accept them for a period of practical training on the job and possibly employ them on a regular basis afterwards.

Three trainees of the first group found employment even before they had finished the course.
All the trainees expressed satisfaction with the training received: 'I have regained confidence in myself and have found just the right occupation'.

In Belfast in Northern Ireland women who have been away from the working world for at least five years can attend a four-week course aimed at enabling them to

- come to know themselves better,
- discover their aptitudes,
- develop their decision-making skill.

They also receive training in preparation for re-entry into the distribution sector.

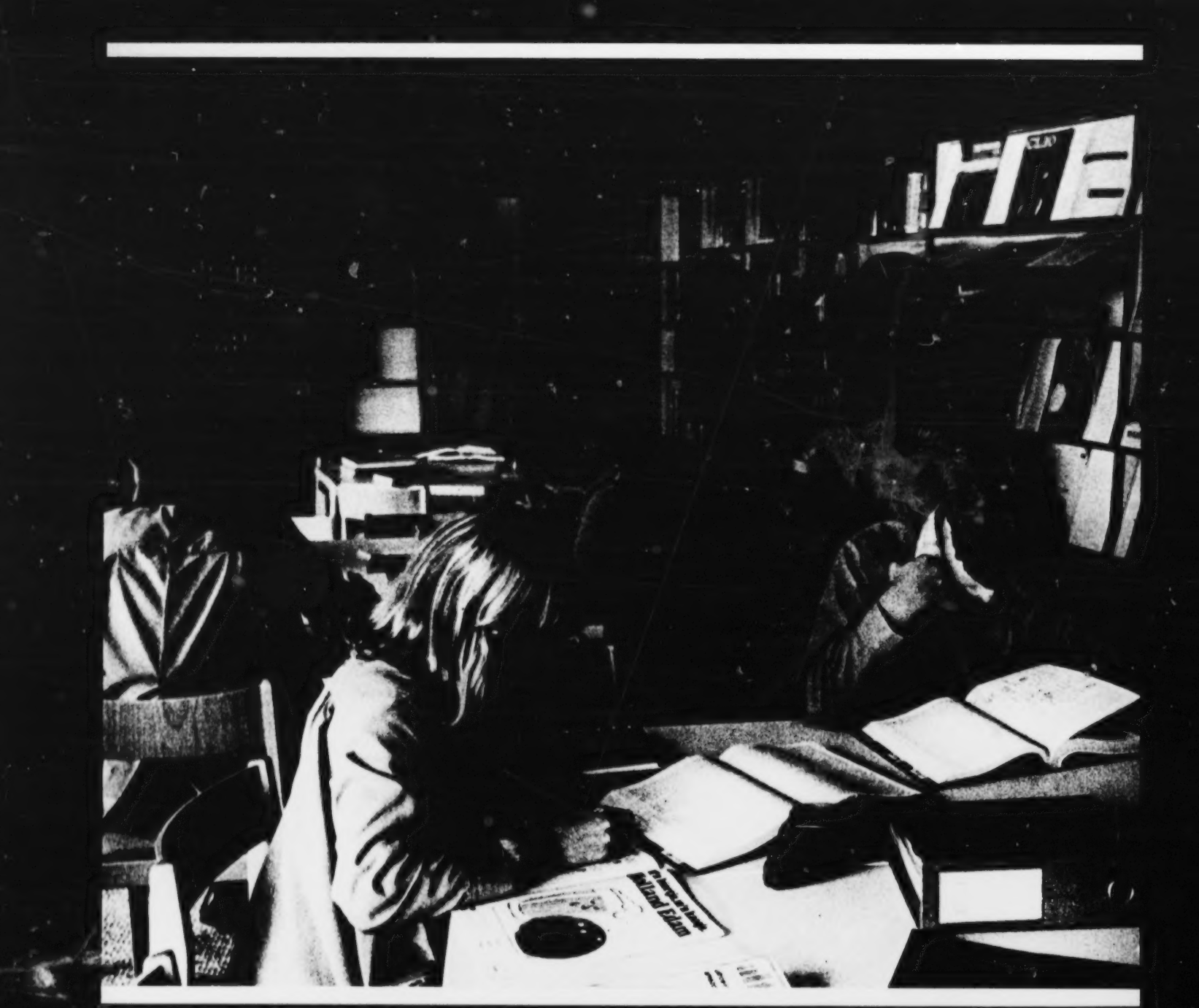
In Charleroi and Hasselt in Belgium and in Nancy and Saint-Etienne in France unemployed women may attend vocational orientation courses aimed at non-traditional industrial occupations.
In these courses women

- are familiarized with machines (they learn that if machines are properly operated, they are neither dirty nor dangerous),
- develop technical skills,
- receive theoretical instruction based on actual practice,
- receive physical training.

In Auxerre and Aurillac in France and in Liège in Belgium businesswomen and craftswomen who work in a family firm have an opportunity to retrain so that they can move on from the role of assistant to that of business associate or business partner within the firm, sharing responsibilities on an equal footing and making decisions on their own. Independent businesswomen who manage their own small or medium business also participate in these programmes.

In Paris business management courses are being run for women holding an upper secondary school certificate who desire to return to working life after a short interruption in their career.

'Let it be proven that women are capable of more than just remaining in the shadow of their husband or their boss.'



In many places in the European Community courses are also held for women who wish to play an active role in social and economic life. In these courses women learn

- how to find their way through the thicket of administration,
- how to conscientiously select an occupation,
- how to seek out real employment opportunities.

In Denmark in 1978 roughly 2 100 women aged 20 to 35, most of whom had no qualification and had been unemployed for more than two years, attended courses of this nature.

The objective was to not leave the course without having either found employment or taken the decision to undergo vocational training.
A social service agency undertakes to solve the problem of caring for the children of these women.

Women, participate!

Career advancement: Also a woman's right

**'A woman in charge . . .,
a woman foreman . . ., why?'**

'In our firm no woman has ever aspired to a management position.'

And why not? If she is qualified.

It has now been realized that a woman holding a position of responsibility does her work no better and no worse than her male colleague does. She just does her job.

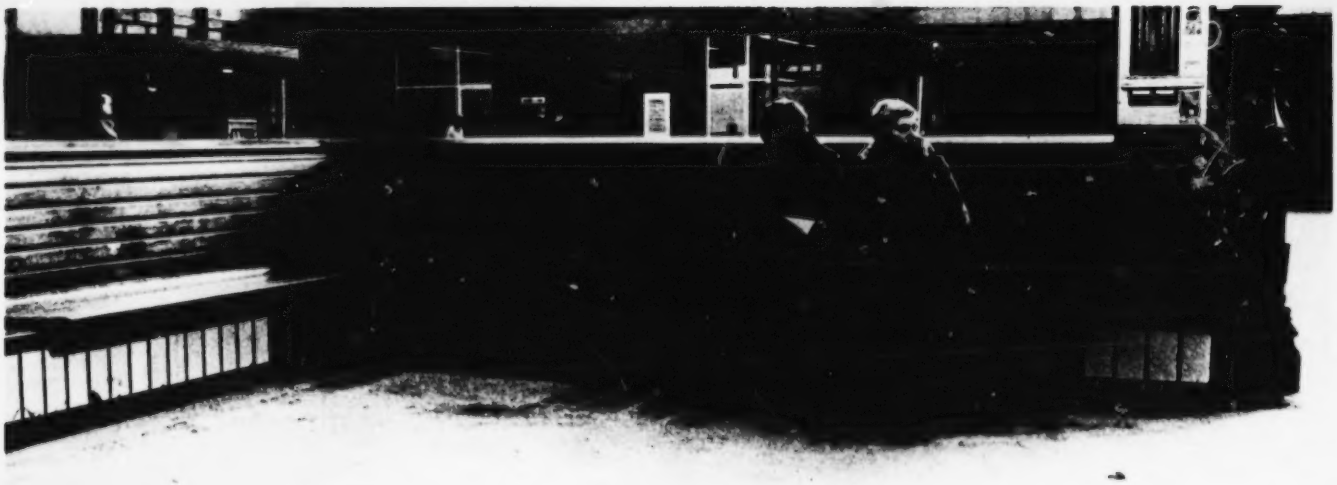
There are many opportunities!

Some large concerns are now launching equal opportunity programmes.

Of the 600 employees of an important firm manufacturing chemical products only 20 are women, and yet one of these women is the personnel manager.
In principle, all functions of the firm can be discharged by women, and thus opportunities for career advancement exist.
For example,

- a receptionist has become a buyer of primary products,
- a telex operator has become an expert accountant and a typing pool coordinator,
- for some time now women employees have had a say in the firm's social policy, participated in the board meetings, etc.

The woman personnel manager organizes sensitivity meetings for women during working hours. The purpose of these meetings is to help women to know themselves better and to encourage them to seek advancement to a higher position, if they so desire.



Many women do not 'recognize the opportunities and do not feel obliged to climb up the career ladder'.

'We simply want to open up the way for them and show them how career advancement can be achieved.'

Over a period of one year 191 women attended these sensitivity meetings in groups of eight to 10. In the meetings the blockages created by prevailing prejudices concerning the capabilities of women could be brought to light and broken down.

At Oxford in England physicians can continue their training and further their specialization on a part-time basis. In this way women physicians who cannot work full-time, for example, because of family responsibilities, can keep abreast of developments in their profession and upgrade their professional skills.

It has generally been assumed in the banking world that a bank's clients would be shocked to find themselves discussing their banking affairs with a woman banker. In the interest of a bank's good reputation, it is felt, senior positions should be held exclusively by men.
This attitude is now changing. Two large banks in Belgium have come to the conclusion that when women occupy positions of responsibility in a bank, this creates a favourable image in the eyes of the public, that of a dynamic, forward-looking management. These banks now admit women to their courses for management personnel and even advertise the courses in order to attract women with an academic background.

Progress is slow but steady:
- in the one bank there were six women trainees and 32 men trainees in 1979 as against two women trainees and 22 men trainees in 1978,
- in the other bank five women and 10 men have been trained since 1978.

In Ireland several courses and seminars have been organized for the purpose of preparing women for managerial positions.
The object of one of the courses of training is to develop managerial skills in the administrative and technical sectors. The participants are prepared on the basis of group discussions, case studies, role games, etc., and are encouraged and assisted in their effort to become employed in a traditionally masculine job at management level.
In 1979 a total of 92 women attended this course.

In Italy women may undergo vocational training geared to prospective employment
- in agriculture, particularly in agricultural cooperatives,
- in the crafts,
- in industry,
- in the building construction industry.

Are women taking advantage of this opportunity?
In Ravenna and in the Bologna area women agricultural workers, employed for the most part on a temporary basis only and often threatened with unemployment, are familiarized with the operation and maintenance of agricultural machines (tractors, sowers, harvesters, etc.).

Training comprises
- function of machines and appliances,
- mechanics,
- maintenance,
- safety,
- operation,
- farming practice in fields being cultivated by cooperatives.

The results have been very good: good final examinations, better integration into the cooperatives in spite of a certain resistance on the part of the men workers, and, at technical level, modification of the agricultural machines to render them better suited to the morphology of women.

In other words:
- a more interesting and a more secure job,
- better pay,
- responsibilities.

Conclusions

In moving on to a new occupation as the result of training, many women have had to surmount a number of personal difficulties and overcome certain prejudices:

- lack of confidence in themselves,
- difficulty with regard to technical adaptation (technical language, tools and equipment, etc.),
- less physical endurance,
- fear of not being accepted by the male colleagues,
- reputedly excessive absenteeism.

On the other hand, these women have benefited by a number of positive factors:

- a growing confidence in themselves,
- improved skill in the technical field,
- greater interest in an occupation which they themselves could select,
- higher pay,
- better career perspectives,
- a higher status within their family and their social environment,
- fuller inner and outer awareness of who they are.

Society as a whole benefits from this better allocation of its human resources economically, socially, humanly.

New perspectives for women
These perspectives will be what women make of them

CEDEFOP — European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

New perspectives for women

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